

Subject: Please Ban Odor Stops & Searches & Promote Racial Justice!

My name is Jane Tamagna and I am one of your constituents. I have lived in Middletown, Maryland for 37 years. I have followed with deep concern and grief the frequent police actions that disproportionately target and affect people of color, with many of these actions resulting in loss of life either through violent death or unjust prison sentences. Many of these actions begin with an unjustified stop.

Bill 51 offers an important tool to assure Maryland recognizes that odor stops are unjustified stops, contribute to racial profiling, and divert critical resources away from true public safety.

As an example, between 2018-2019 Prince George's County cleared only 18% of all violent crimes. During the same period, the County's police force arrested nearly 3,000 people for possession of marijuana over 10 grams – 90% of whom were black. Yet only 20 cases resulted in a guilty conviction. While officers were attending to 2,980 odor stop cases that did not result in a guilty conviction, 82% of all violent crimes went uncleared.

Ending odor stops contributes to trusted policing that does not disproportionately affect people of color, increases resources needed to address violent crime, and offers one small step leading to the day when families of color do not have to have “the conversation” with their children.

It is the logical and necessary extension of the legislature's work in 2022 to legalize recreational marijuana use to limit the use of the odor of marijuana in police encounters in the 2023 legislative session. Marylanders should not fear police interactions because of the lingering odor of a now-legal substance.

Thank you for your leadership and willingness to make bold change that meets the moment we are in! I know that with your support of Senate Bill 51 we can ensure that we get legalization right in Maryland and protect Marylanders from unnecessary police interactions and violations of their rights.

Sincerely,  
Jane Tamagna